



International Health Regulations (IHRs or IHR(2005)): A U.S. Government Perspective

Great Lakes Border Health Initiative Conference

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IHR(2005) Defined

- An international legal instrument that governs the roles of the World Health Organization (WHO) and countries that have accepted IHR(2005) in identifying and responding to and sharing information about ***public health emergencies of international concern***

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Public Health Emergencies of International Concern—Defined

- An extraordinary event that constitutes a public health risk to other countries through the international spread of disease and that may require a coordinated international response
- Includes incidents of a biological, chemical, or radiological nature, whether naturally-occurring or intentional


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History of the IHRs

- First adopted by the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1969
- Significantly revised in 2005
- IHR(2005) will enter into force for most countries on June 15, 2007


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Intent of IHR(2005)




- Designed to prevent and protect against the international spread of diseases, while minimizing interference with world travel and trade




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Authority of WHO Under IHR(2005)




- Clearer authority to recommend to countries that have accepted IHR(2005) measures that will help contain the international spread of disease, including public health actions to be taken at ports, airports, land borders and on means of transport that involve international travel



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The U.S. Implementation of IHR(2005)



- The U.S. Government:
 - ◆ began the process of implementing the IHRs immediately upon accepting them in 2006
 - ◆ will use already strong State and local networks to receive information about events of concern
- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), with support from other U.S. Federal Departments and Agencies, has assumed the lead role in carrying out the implementation of IHR(2005)

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Responsibilities of Countries that have Accepted IHR(2005)



- Develop, strengthen, and maintain core public health capacities for surveillance and response
- Identify a National IHR Focal Point for 24/7 communication with WHO
- Notify WHO of potential public health emergencies of international concern
- Immediately report to WHO outbreaks of smallpox, polio, new strains of human influenza, and SARS
- Respond to public health risks that may spread internationally

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Responsibility to Report Other Events

- Countries will use the following criteria (among other things) to determine whether they must report other events:
 - ◆ Is the public health impact of the event serious?
 - ◆ Is the event unusual or unexpected?
 - ◆ Is there a significant risk of international spread?
 - ◆ Is there a significant risk of international travel or trade restrictions?

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Examples of how the U.S. is Implementing IHR(2005)

- The HHS Secretary's Operations Center has been designated as the National IHR(2005) Focal Point
- The U.S. Government is developing standard operating procedures (SOPs) for the determination and reporting of public health events that may become public health emergencies of international concern
 - ◆ Outreach to the public health community by the U.S. Government to ensure that all stakeholders understand their roles and responsibilities



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Examples of how the U.S. is Implementing IHR(2005)

- The U.S. Government is:
 - ◆ reviewing and identifying gaps in current capacities at points of entry
 - ◆ identifying competent authorities at points of entry
 - ◆ engaging the transportation sector to ensure that operators of international conveyances, such as airplanes, ships, and trains, understand their roles and responsibilities


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Collaboration with State and Local Health Authorities

- CDC has engaged the executive leadership of major public health groups, including:
 - ◆ The Council of State and Territorial Epidemiologists (CSTE)
 - ◆ The Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO)
 - ◆ The Association of Public Health Laboratories (APHL)
 - ◆ The National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO)
 - ◆ Environmental Health Directors (EHD)

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Collaboration with State and Local Health Authorities




- IHR “Webinar” produced by CDC and sponsored by CSTE, ASTHO, APHL, and EHD to be held on July 20, 2007 (still being planned)
- U.S. state health authorities, through CSTE, have agreed to report to the CDC any public health incident involving any infectious disease listed in Annex 2 of the IHRs

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Collaboration with State and Local Health Authorities



- CSTE has undertaken a comprehensive review of U.S. national case definitions to map them to the international (WHO) case definitions for standardization of reporting

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The U.S. Implementation of IHR(2005)

- **“As we have seen recently with SARS and H5N1 avian influenza, diseases respect no boundaries. In today’s world, a threat anywhere means danger everywhere. . . . The improved global cooperation that will come from implementing these new International Health Regulations represents a major step forward for global public health.”**

— HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt

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